

Thomas Pinckney to Andrew Jackson, May 26, 1828, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

MAJOR-GENERAL THOMAS PINCKNEY TO JACKSON.

Charleston, May 26, 1828.

Dear Sir, I am very sorry that it is not in my power to comply with the request contained in your favor of the 22d of last month by forwarding to you a copy of your dispatch to me of the 28th of March 1814. At the close of the last war an order was issued by the Secretary of War, directing that all the military correspondence and documents relating thereto, should be transferd to the department at the seat of Government: in conformity whereto all your official letters to me must have been sent to Washington, together with all the contents of the Adjutant Generals and inspectors Offices of the District in which I commanded. But, although much debilitated by sickness and old age, I hasten to answer your letter which (though with the Nashville post mark of the 1st May) has but recently reached me, in order to assure you of my conviction that your letter, as published in Niles' Register, must be an accurate copy of what you wrote on the battle ground¹ the morning after the Action: although it must appear presumptuous for a man in his seventy eighth year to prefer the result of his recollection to that of one 12 or 15 years younger. But I will explain to you the grounds of this preference, from whence you can draw your own inference. Your doubts appear to be founded in part on the circumstance of the 16 Indians killed on the morning on which you wrote; of which you have no recollection: but I not only perfectly recollect the fact having been made known to me either by your dispatch or by the relation of Officers who supported you in that decisive victory, but I well remember that it was the subject of much conversation as a conspicuous instance of the savage principle of neither receiving nor giving quarter. From the verbal accounts these 16

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¹ See vol. I., p. 488. For the more formal report mentioned above, the editor has instead printed, *ibid.*, p. 489, Jackson's report to Governor Blount.

Indians were reported to have posted themselves in a thicket within the inclosure, from whence they early in the morning fired upon our people; and although repeatedly urged in their own language, to surrender, with a promise of quarter and good treatment, they persisted in their resistance, until it became necessary to destroy them; as they could not be left, or permitted to escape to continue their depredations on our frontier. And you will observe that the above is alluded to in my letter to Governor Early as the cause of the extensive slaughter of that tremendous day. Another reason is that I perfectly remember the sentiments contained in my letter to the Governor of Georgia and although I have not my letter book at hand, I believe that letter as reported in the Register to be correct. I have also a perfect recollection of the "hasty sketch of the situation in which the enemy were incamped and of the manner in which you approached them" as stated in that dispatch. It may be observed also that as the letters were published in the Register on the 23d of April of the same year no motive could at that time have existed for altering the original document. To which I may add that my Secretary was remarkable for the fidelity and accuracy of his transactions: and that one of my aids, I had with me in the Creek nation, but now in this City, perfectly remembers the transaction of the Indians killed on the 28th of March, as related by the Officers of your Army whom we joined at Fort Jackson.

But I presume another ground exists for your doubts on this subject which your delicacy may have prevented you from objecting to me: otherwise you might very well have enquired how I could have been so inattentive to all military usage and etiquette as to forward a copy of your dispatch to the Governor of Georgia, which ought not to have been communicated but through the department of war. This is accounted for as follows: When in conformity to the orders of the President I assumed the general direction of the Creek war, I found the only troops at my disposal, for this purpose, consisted of the Militia of the adjacent States. An intense interest in the events of the war was naturally excited in those States, particularly among the relatives and friends of those actively engaged in

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the contest; and thinking that, in our circumstances, the public service would not suffer by deviating, in favor of these feelings, from the usual routine, I solicited and obtained from the War department permission to publish at once on the spot, the official communications I might receive of the events occurring in the different detachments of the Army under my direction.